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INFO RUEHEE/ARAB LEAGUE COLLECTIVE

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E.O. 12958: DECL: 09/01/2019
TAGS: PREL KPAL KWBG IS JO
SUBJECT: MUGHRABI GATE: JORDAN HAS NOT RECEIVED ANY
ISRAELI OFFER ON A SITE SURVEY

REF: A. AMMAN 669
 1B. JERUSALEM 1220
 1C. PARISFR 766

Classified By: Ambassador R. Stephen Beecroft
for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

11. (S/NF) Summary: Jordan has not received any Israeli offer that would allow a survey team to measure the site of the Mughrabi Gate ascent to the Haram Al-Sharif/Temple Mount.

The King raised Mughrabi Gate directly with Israeli PM Netanyahu during a July visit, and Jordan's FM raised it during an August 31 meeting with Israeli security officials. Neither meeting resulted in an agreement on allowing a Jordanian team to survey the site. Jordanian officials believe that their new strategy has produced a "glimmer of hope" despite what they see as recent mixed signals in the Israeli-Jordanian relationship. End Summary.

Double Tracking Mughrabi Gate

12. (S/NF) Poloff asked Samer Naber, Deputy Director of the Foreign Minister's Private Office, for an update on Jordan's efforts to secure a favorable outcome in the dispute with Israel over the ascent to the Mughrabi Gate entrance to the Haram Al-Sharif/Temple Mount during an August 31 meeting. While Israeli officials have indicated to the Department their willingness to allow a survey team to access the site and take measurements, no such move has been formally conveyed to the Jordanians. When poloff delicately probed on new developments on the measurement issue, Naber responded that Jordanian officials have been invited to talk about the issue but not survey the site.

13. (S/NF) Naber said that King Abdullah raised the issue of Mughrabi Gate directly with PM Netanyahu during the latter's visit to Aqaba in July. Netanyahu was reportedly in "listening mode" and failed to offer a substantive response to the King's request for a mutually agreeable solution. Still, Jordanian officials were heartened that Netanyahu did not dismiss the King's view of Mughrabi Gate out of hand.

14. (S/NF) After Netanyahu's visit, Jordanian officials changed their strategy on reaching out to the Israeli government. In the absence of substantive movement from Israeli MFA officials, Jordan's security and intelligence services began to reach out to their Israeli counterparts in an effort to double track the issue. Those contacts resulted in a meeting between Foreign Minister Nasser Judeh, Netanyahu's National Security Advisor Uzi Arad, and other Israeli officials on August 31 to discuss Mughrabi Gate and other matters. Judeh told the Ambassador after the meeting that Arad and his staff were noncommittal on concrete actions, but clearly understood Jordan's position on the matter. Naber said that the security track had created a "glimmer of hope" on the part of Jordanian officials, but confirmed that no invitation for a survey team was advanced.

Moving Forward or Backward?

¶15. (S/NF) Naber said that Jordanian officials were puzzled by recent mixed signals in their relationship with Israel. While Jordanian officials are heartened by progress on the Israeli-Palestinian front, they feel that Israeli actions on Mughrabi Gate and Jerusalem are moving in the opposite direction. Naber cited a lawsuit by a disgruntled waqf employee which is being pursued in Israeli rather than Jordanian courts, development of the Shepherd's Hotel, and the recent visit of a Jewish religious group to the Al-Aqsa mosque area as examples of Israeli actions which take away from the overall moves toward advancement of the Israeli-Jordanian relationship (Ref B).

Interagency Coordination

¶16. (S/NF) In an effort to bring together the disparate stakeholders within Jordan's government, an interagency committee has been formed to coordinate government policy on Mughrabi Gate issues. The committee is chaired by representatives from the Royal Court, and is comprised of officials from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ministry of Awqaf, and General Intelligence Directorate. (Note: Naber is the MFA representative. End Note.)

Beecroft